

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 141179

41

ORIGIN AF-18

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 141179

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (OMISSION LINE 2, PARA. 2.C.)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, BC, LT, WZ, SF

SUBJECT: AIA INTEREST IN BLS AIRLINE

REF: GABORONE 982 NOTAL

1. PRESIDENT N. BERGT OF ALASKA INTERNATIONAL AIR (AIA)
HAS INFORMED DEPARTMENT OF HIS PLANS TO SPEND TWO WEEKS
BEGINNING JULY 23 IN SOUTH AFRICA (JOHANNESBURG), BOTSWANA,
LESOTHO, AND SWAZILAND TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL FOR EXPANDING
AIA ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2. QUESTIONS BERGT WILL BE CONSIDERING INCLUDE:

A. RELATIVE MERITS OF BOTSWANA-ONLY AIRLINE VS. AIRLINE

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PAGE 02 STATE 141179

INCLUDING BOTSWANA AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING A

POSSIBLE BLS AIRLINE.

B. POSSIBLE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALREADY OPERATING SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES, SUCH AS, FOR EXAMPLE, FREIGHT SERVICES LIMITED (REFTEL) AND/OR CONSOLIDATED AFRICAN MINING, LIMITED, WHICH OWNS SWAZI AIR AND PROTEA.

C. REACTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO EFFORT BY U.S. COMPANY TO ESTABLISH BLS AIRLINE, WHICH WOULD OBVIOUSLY REQUIRE SERVICING FACILITIES AND BOTH OVERFLIGHT AND LANDING RIGHTS FROM SOUTH AFRICA. (BERGT IS FULLY AWARE THAT SAG REACTION IN PART WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY RELATIONSHIP AIA WOULD BE ABLE TO WORK OUT WITH SA-BASED COMPANIES PRESENTLY OPERATING IN BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, AND SWAZILAND.)

3. BERGT INQUIRED AS TO PROGRESS OF UNDP FEASIBILITY STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR LESOTHO SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN 1973 (MASERU A-13) IN CONSIDERING QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO TRY TO INCLUDE LESOTHO IN POSSIBLE BLS AIRLINE, DESPITE ITS LESS PROMISING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS.

4. BERGT HAS PROMISED TO DISCUSS VISIT WITH DEPARTMENT UPON HIS RETURN AND, IF HIS EXPLORATIONS ARE SUFFICIENTLY PROMISING, HE MAY COME TO WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS MORE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL. RUSH

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